

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) has evoked strong opinions and emotions. For some, the belief in or study of UFOs has assumed the dimensions of a religious quest. Others remain nonbelievers or at least skeptical of the existence of alien beings and elusive vehicles which never quite seem to manifest themselves. Regardless of one's conviction, nowhere has the debate about UFOs been more spirited than over the events that unfolded near the small New Mexico city of Roswell in the summer of 1947. Popularly known as the Roswell Incident, this event has become the most celebrated UFO encounter of all time and has stimulated enthusiasts like none other. Numerous witnesses, including former military personnel and respectable members of the local community, have come forward with tales of humanoid beings, alien technologies, and government cover-ups that have caused even the most skeptical observer to pause and take notice. Inevitably these stories coming from the desert have spawned countless articles, books, films, and even museums claiming to have proof that visitors had come from outer space.

In February 1994, the Air Force was informed that the General Accounting Office (GAO), an investigative agency of Congress, planned a formal audit to ascertain "the facts regarding the reported crash of an UFO in 1949 [1947] at Roswell, New Mexico."<sup>1</sup> This task was delegated to numerous agencies, but the focus was on the U.S. Air Force, the agency most often accused of hiding information and records on Roswell. The Presidential Science Advisor had also expressed an interest in the investigation. Thereupon, the Secretary of the Air Force directed that a complete records search identify, locate, and examine any and all information available on this subject. From the outset there was no predisposition to refute or overlook any information. Moreover, if any of the information discovered was under security classification, it was to be declassified, and if active or former Air Force officials had been sworn to a secrecy oath, they were to be freed from it. In short, the objective was to tell the Congress, and the American people, *everything* the Air Force knew about the Roswell claims.

Subsequently, researchers conducted an extensive search of Air Force archives, record centers, and scientific facilities. Seeking information that might help to explain peculiar tales of odd wreckage and alien bodies, the researchers reviewed a monumental number

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1. Memo, Marcia J. Van Note, DOD/IG, for Distribution, subj: General Accounting Office (GAO) Letter Dated February 9, 1944 . . . , Feb 23, 1994.

of documents concerning a variety of events, including aircraft crashes, errant missile tests, and nuclear mishaps.

The researchers reported to the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF/AA), the office responsible for both Air Force records and security policy oversight. Within SAF/AA, the tasking fell to the Director of Security and Special Program Oversight and its specialized subunit, the Declassification and Review Team. This team, comprised entirely of Reservists, was well versed in the Air Force's records system and its complex declassification procedures. Previously, Declassification and Review Team members demonstrated their expertise and effectiveness by declassifying millions of pages of Southeast Asian War and Prisoner of War–Missing in Action records.

As this study makes abundantly clear, the Declassification and Review Team found no evidence of any extraterrestrial craft or alien flight crew. In fact, what they did find had been declassified for more than twenty years—a shadowy, formerly Top Secret project, code-named MOGUL.

Project MOGUL resulted from two important post–World War II priorities set by the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, Henry H. “Hap” Arnold. These were to continue the cooperative wartime relationship between civilian research institutions and the military, and to maintain America's technological superiority, especially with respect to guarding against a bolt from the blue—in other words, a devastating surprise attack. MOGUL addressed both of these concerns. Developed partly under contract with leading scientific institutions—such as New York University (NYU), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Columbia University, and the University of California at Los Angeles—MOGUL's objective was to develop a long-range system capable of detecting Soviet nuclear detonations and ballistic missile launches.

Army Air Forces officials assembled an expert group of military and civilian scientists to carry out the project. The group included Dr. W. Maurice Ewing of Columbia University, a preeminent geophysicist and oceanographer; Dr. Athelstan F. Spilhaus, the Director of Research at NYU who later advised five presidents on scientific and cultural matters; Dr. James Peoples, the Air Force's civilian project scientist and later editor of the *Journal of Geophysical Research*; Albert P. Crary, also a civilian Air Force scientist, known for significant contributions to Antarctic research; and Charles B. Moore, Project Engineer at NYU and an atmospheric physicist who pioneered the use of giant plastic research balloons still widely used today. Col. Marcellus Duffy, a respected Air Force pilot and scientific administrator, led the project. Capt. Albert C. Trakowski, a young Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate, followed Duffy in the leadership role.

Determining whether the Soviets were testing nuclear devices was of the highest national priority; it demanded the utmost secrecy if the information gained was to be useful. When the Soviets exploded their first atomic device in August 1949, the experimental Project MOGUL was not in operation. However, the explosion was detected by a specially equipped Air Force B–29 aircraft. Accordingly, MOGUL was conducted under stringent security—secluded laboratories, code words, maximum security clearances, and strictest enforcement of need-to-know rules. Nevertheless, while the nature of the project remained

shrouded in secrecy, some of its operations obviously could not. The deployment of giant trains of balloons—over thirty research balloons and experimental sensors strung together and stretching more than 600 feet—could be neither disguised nor hidden from the public. Moreover, operational necessity required that these balloons be launched during daylight hours. It was therefore not surprising that these balloons were often mistaken for UFOs. In fact, MOGUL recovery crews often listened to broadcasts of UFO reports to assist them in their tracking operations. Additionally, the balloons were unsteerable, leading to such amusing events as the one reported by the *New York Times* in which a secret MOGUL balloon “floated blithely over the rooftops of Flatbush . . . causing general public excitement . . . before it came to rest on top of a [Brooklyn] tavern.”<sup>2</sup> In another episode, MOGUL balloon recovery technicians directed a B-17 bomber, which was tracking one of the tests, to buzz and scare off a curious oil rig crew that was about to “capture” a balloon train that had fallen near Roswell. The ruse worked. However, too much activity was going on for the project to remain completely hidden. A MOGUL project officer later noted, “It was like having an elephant in your backyard . . . and hoping no one would notice.”<sup>3</sup> These occurrences were typical, leading the recovery crews to describe themselves as *Balloonatics*, due to the predicaments in which the wandering balloons sometimes placed them, but the information the balloons were attempting to obtain was vital.

To attempt to limit unauthorized disclosure, the Air Force employed a security mechanism known as compartmentation. Compartmentation controlled access to classified information by dispersing portions of the research among several facilities and institutions. Each participating entity received only enough information necessary to accomplish its assigned tasks. In the case of MOGUL, only a small circle of Air Force officers received the intimate details that linked together these unrelated research projects. The use of compartmentation along with strict enforcement of the need to know enabled MOGUL to remain a secret—despite its obvious security difficulties—and to remain unevaluated for many years as the cause of the Roswell Incident.

The issue of compartmentation was significant because some UFO researchers assert that the persons who recovered the MOGUL equipment, members of the 509th Bombardment Group stationed at Roswell Army Airfield, should have been able to recognize the debris collected at the crash site as that of a research balloon. Although members of the 509th possessed high-level clearances, they were not privy to the existence of MOGUL; their job was to deliver nuclear weapons, not to detect them. The unusual combination of experimental equipment did not encourage easy identification that undoubtedly left some members of the 509th with unanswered questions. Some UFO enthusiasts have manipulated these unanswered questions to support their flying-saucer recovery scenario, while eagerly supplying unfounded explanations of extraterrestrial visitation and cosmic conspiracy. Additionally, many claims of a flying saucer crash at Roswell rest on the description of debris collected at the Foster ranch site. UFO researchers, including those

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2. *New York Times*, “Balloon Staggers Down to Brooklyn Tavern, Hooks Itself to Roof and Upsets Decorum,” Oct 1, 1948.

3. *New York Times*, “Wreckage of a ‘Spaceship’: Of This Earth (and U.S.),” Sep 18, 1994.

who are said to have known *all about* MOGUL, apparently did not compare the descriptions of the suspect debris with that of the components of a Project MOGUL balloon train. MOGUL reports and documents that contain descriptions, illustrations, and photographs have been publicly available for at least twenty years. Had the researchers completed even a cursory comparison, they would have found that the materials were suspiciously similar; detailed examination would have shown them to be one and the same. In the final analysis, it appears these individuals have pursued the convenient red herring provided by Roswell Army Airfield, while the real explanation lay just over the Sacramento Mountains at the MOGUL launch site in Alamogordo.

This report explains the events that transpired in and near Roswell, New Mexico, in the summer of 1947. It is based on written documentation and first-hand accounts of participants, all of which are provided here in their entirety. While these answers are not as titillating as tales of unearthly craft and creatures, it is a fascinating story nonetheless.

JAMES McANDREW, 1ST LT, USAFR

Declassification and Review Officer

SAF/AAZD



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

JUL 27 1994

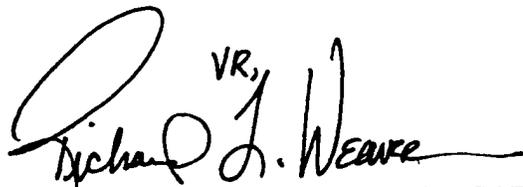
MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

FROM: SAF/AAZ  
1720 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1720

SUBJECT: Report of Air Force Research Regarding the "Roswell Incident"

Attached is a report prepared in support of a General Accounting Office (GAO) audit that is seeking to identify information concerning the "Roswell Incident." The report documents the considerable effort expended by numerous Air Force offices and personnel in this matter.

The Air Force efforts did not identify any indication that the "Roswell Incident" was any type of extraterrestrial event or that the Air Force has engaged in a 47 year conspiracy or "cover-up" of information relating to it. Therefore, it is assumed that pro-UFO groups will strongly object to the attached report and denounce it as either shortsighted or a continuation of the "cover-up" conspiracy. Nevertheless, the attached report is a good faith effort and the first time any agency of the government has positively responded officially to the ever-escalating claims surrounding the Roswell matter.

*VR,*  
  
RICHARD L. WEAVER, Col, USAF  
Director, Security and Special  
Program Oversight

Attachment:  
Report of Research Regarding  
the "Roswell Incident", 27 Jul 94